

Elsie Ivancich Dunin, *Prošlost u sadašnjosti: Svadbe u Dubrovačkom primorju. Past into the Present. Weddings of the Dubrovačko Primorje*. Matica hrvatska – ogranak Dubrovnik, Dubrovnik 2013. Pages 335.

Elsie Ivancich Dunin's book is an exemplary study about the wedding, stability in continuity, as well the changes in the upper villages of the Dubrovačko Primorje: Mrčevo, Gromača, Kliševo, Ljubač and Osojnik.

The author is an *Amerikanica* [American], as she herself says in the preface — but on account of her field work, the time spent here, and her devotion to this area and its people, she is a *Primorka* [a woman from Primorje] just as much. Therefore, she is fully qualified to write about one of the most important personal (and social) events in human life, what is more, in a small and compact community, strongly determined by tradition, language, and a closely-knit web of kin and friendship relationships which even a *našijenac* (insider) may find hard to enter.

She is primarily an expert ethnochoreologist with years of practical and scientific research of the dances and dancing in the United States of America, Mexico and Europe. She was born in the USA, to the parents of Croatian and Hungarian origin, who introduced her to the world of folk dance. She studied in Los Angeles (UCLA), where she graduated in the performing arts and dance. Later, at the newly-established Department of Dance she was the first to receive a Master's Degree in 1966 with an ethnochoreological thesis: *Gluho dinarsko kolo* (The Mute Dinaric dance). The South-Slav folkdance repertoire has remained a lasting focus of her research. At the same university, some thirty years later, she chaired the Department of Dance, and is now among the rare emeriti professors.

Elsie Ivancich Dunin has always had a place in the narrow circle of dance experts whose approach to dance was at the same time scientific, popular and practical: she was known to gather dance groups during her early days at college, conducted and commented the performances at radio stations, during her stay in Croatia she performed in *Lado*, and in Macedonia in the biggest folk ensemble, the *Tanec*. It was there that she discovered the dance world of the Romani (Gypsies), which she studied afterwards in Croatia, US and Mexico and amply documented. She has long collaborated with the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research in Zagreb. She spent her sabbatical (years 1976–1977) in the surroundings of Dubrovnik studying, among other things, the wedding in Primorje, when all of this actually started. Besides, Elsie Dunin is among the rare internationally acclaimed dance ethnologists who founded the ICTM, International Council which furthers the study of traditional music and dance. She herself initiated several international conferences and the research of the sword dances of Korčula, contextualising them within a wider Mediterranean space. Her bonds with the Dubrovnik area are deep and lasting: she settled in Zaton, where she spends most of the year.

The book *Prošlost u sadašnjosti. Svadbe u Dubrovačkom primorju* is a direct outcome of her empirical research: prompted by the American performance of *lindó* and the traditional dances of the Dubrovačko Primorje, Elsie Dunin arrives 'on the site' where she observes, videorecords and describes the traditional five-day wedding (from Thursday to Monday) of the two brothers, Luko and Stijepo Radiš, in 1977 and 1979, but also the weddings of the next generation, their sons, some thirty years later in 2003 and 2009, completing thus a unique social picture of one family through time, as well the wedding customs in the Dubrovačko Primorje. Her picture develops from the personal direct research experience which, most importantly for the whole research procedure, she was able to re-examine in the most part, 'control' by means of videorecordings of parallel date, which was extremely rare at the time of the first weddings, and was not forced to rely on the written accounts or selective memories (her own and of other participants). The interpretation of the weddings of the sons in 2003 and 2009 is based on the author's personal participation and the video recordings made by a professional. It falls into an exemplary ethnographic case study, and, certainly, into a broader study of culture.

A detailed description of two weddings in one family has served as a specific clue for the study of continuity, changes and discontinuity in the wedding cycle as a result of the rapid social and economic shifts clearly noticeable on the families under study and the society on the whole. Wedding roles and the song texts from the end of the 1970s have been used as a key for the understanding of the kinship structure, and to a certain extent of the traditional family values and relations. Having only a few locations in common, the sons' weddings almost thirty years later add an entirely new dimension to the study of the continuity and changes of the customs, dance, but most of all, of the way of life. And what is extremely important for the study of culture, though rarely grasped and with difficulty: we observe old participants in the new roles and vice versa, which gives this study also a touch of the family (village, local) chronicle from which, in the everyday seemingly unimportant details that accompany the wedding, life springs in its fullness. At the same time, the wedding of the two brothers closely pans almost half a century of life in the upper villages of the Dubrovačko Primorje, while the supplements, accounts and evidence from the literature shift the picture further back into the past.

The book is much broader: it pinpoints the commonplaces in the wedding, songs and toasts, changes, repetition of ancient wedding patterns in the new context, but equally so the incorporation of the fundamentally new parts into the old traditional wedding as the price of globalisation and commercialisation, which defines the topic of the book (wedding) in the culturologically more complex terms with regard to both the topic and the subject-matter. The text itself goes beyond the mere description of the rural wedding customs, as it also illustrates the centuries-old interplay between the cultures of the Dubrovačko Primorje and the Herzegovinian hinterland, urban (Dubrovnik) and rural culture, here documented with some peculiarities: an accordionist invited to the wedding but proved to be unfamiliar with the folk repertoire, the guests from the City (Dubrovnik) in 1979 who were not acquainted with the traditional songs, the Primorje wedding performed at Pile for the first time, loss of details from the ritual components of the customs due to urban life of some kin, brides from Herzegovina who are not familiar with the "local" tradition. Additionally, the illuminated details of the historic, economic and other relevant circumstances—border with Herzegovina, Ottoman Empire, abductions, established routes of people and goods, ports in Primorje, the relations with the Ragusan patricians—testify to the wedding in a much broader context than visible.

Apart from the dances and the description of the five-day wedding celebration, we learn of the wedding roles and the possible theatrical interpretation of the whole event (improvised barter for the bride which is sometimes performed as a dialogued toast, false bride, *grad se gradi*), wedding apparel, weapons, mythical-symbolic components (apple, shooting, circling around the dinner tables three times), food, songs recited (toasts, welcome speech) or sung. Men dominate, while women merely appear in passive roles, within an ever accentuated solid family structure opposed to any external factor, outsiders, other families, to anything that is 'other than us'.

The song texts given in the supplements originate from the wedding itself and not from the memory of the singers recounted afterwards. Therefore, we can follow the performed text with all the contextual components, which is extremely rare in folklore documentation, and is especially significant for the study of texts, their stable and changing parts, formulas, adaptation to the situation, audience, all the more reason to emphasise this aspect of the book.

As already mentioned, the book is an exhaustive and reliable description and commentary grounded on the author's own research, as well as the thematic professional and scientific sources. Her in-depth local micro-studies are a welcome addition to the ethnographic and ethnological study of wedding in Croatia, and will certainly be appreciated as a pleasant and easy reading invoking the happiest moments in life. The parallel text in English makes the book accessible to a much broader readership, notably to the present generation of those whose ancestors emigrated from these parts as a sentimental journey to the land of their parents.

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